

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application, as amended, is respectfully requested. Claims 1-23, 43-44, 47-49 have been canceled. Claims 24, 31 and 50 have been amended.

Claims 1-7, 26, 47-49, 52 and 56 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent no. 6,223,559 of Balakrishnan ("Balakrishnan"). Claims 8-60 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Balakrishnan in view of U.S. Patent no. 6,240,448 of Imielinski et al. ("Imielinski").

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections. As discussed below, the cited references do not disclose or suggest the present invention, either individually or in combination. The amendments to claims 24, 31 and 50 are made only to place those claims in better form and are not made in response to any of the rejections or for purposes of complying with any requirement of patentability (no amendments are believed to be necessary for such purposes).

The present invention generally relates to a system in which a centralized server containing a voice browser brokers information associated with a user between two or more speech-enabled sites on a network. The voice browser facilitates sharing of the information between the different speech-enabled sites to allow the speech-enabled sites to use the information to optimize spoken dialogs with the user. As discussed further below cited references do not have

such a goal, and therefore, do not disclose or suggest what is claimed in the present application.

Claim 24 provides:

24. A method of executing a spoken dialog between a user and a speech-enabled site in a network including a plurality of voice-hyperlinked speech-enabled sites, the method comprising:
acquiring information associated with the user at a first speech-enabled site of the plurality of speech-enabled sites during a first spoken dialog between the user and the first speech-enabled site;
in response to the user initiating a voice hyperlink to access a second speech-enabled site of the plurality of speech-enabled sites, providing the information associated with the user to the second speech-enabled site; and
optimizing a second spoken dialog between the user and the second speech-enabled site by applying the information associated with the user to reduce a number of states of the second spoken dialog.
(Underlining added.)

The cited references neither disclose nor suggest such a method, whether the references are taken individually or in combination. In particular, the references do not disclose or suggest acquiring information associated with a user during a first spoken dialog at a first speech-enabled site and, in response to the user initiating a voice hyperlink to access a second speech-enabled, providing the information associated with the user to the second speech-enabled site, and then optimizing a second spoken dialog between the user and the second speech-enabled site by applying the information associated with the user to reduce a number of states of the second dialog.

Balakrishnan relates to a technique for using spoken commands to control two or more applications on a computer system. See abstract, col. 4 lines 28-40. The Examiner has acknowledged that Balakrishnan does not teach using an application in a plurality of speech enabled sites (Office Action, p. 4). Applicant agrees. In addition, Balakrishnan does not even relate to performing or facilitating spoken dialogs between a user and a machine. Balakrishnan simply relates to allowing a user to control a computer using spoken commands; there is no two-way spoken interaction between the user and the machine. Thus, Balakrishnan clearly does not disclose or suggest the method of claim 24.

Imielinski relates to a system in which hyperlinked Web pages are embedded with audio content and can be accessed by a user using a telephone keypad or spoken commands. See abstract. However, Imielinski does not disclose or suggest acquiring information associated with a user during a first spoken dialog at a first speech-enabled site and, in response to the user initiating a voice hyperlink to access a second speech-enabled, providing the information associated with the user to the second speech-enabled site, and then optimizing a second spoken dialog between the user and the second speech-enabled site by applying the information associated with the user.

Hence, no combination of Balakrishnan and/or Imielinski would produce or even suggest all of the limitations of the present invention, as set forth in claim 24. Furthermore, to support an obviousness rejection, there also must be something in the prior art to suggest the desirability, and thus the obviousness,

of making the claimed combination. In re Rouffet, 149 F.3d1350, 1356 (Fed. Cir. 1998). Such suggestion may not be found using hindsight gleaned from the applicant's specification. Id. at 1358. In the present case, there is no suggestion or motivation in the cited art to make the claimed method. Consequently, claim 24 and its dependent claims are allowable over the cited art.

Claim 27 provides:

27. A method of facilitating operation of a plurality of interconnected speech-enabled sites on a network, the method comprising:
providing a server system on the network; and
operating the server system to selectively provide the speech-enabled sites with access to information about users of the speech-enabled sites.
(Underlining added.)

Neither Balakrishnan nor Imielinski contains any disclosure or suggestion of using a server system to selectively provide multiple speech-enabled sites with access to information about users of the speech-enabled sites. Consequently, claim 27 and its dependent claims are allowable over the cited art.

Claim 60 recites operations similar to those of claim 27 discussed above and is allowable over the cited art for similar reasons.

Claim 31 provides:

31. A method of facilitating operation of a plurality of interconnected speech-enabled sites on a network, the method comprising:
using a server system on the network to execute a browser for enabling a user to access the speech-enabled sites; and

using the voice browser to broker information associated with the user for the speech-enabled sites on the network.
(Underlining added.)

Neither Balakrishnan nor Imielinski contains any disclosure or suggestion of using a voice browser in a server system to broker information associated with a user for multiple speech-enabled sites on a network. Consequently, claim 31 and its dependent claims are allowable over the cited art.

Claim 45 provides:

45. A method of facilitating operation of a speech-enabled site on a network, the method comprising:

receiving a request at a server system for information associated with a user, the request associated with a speech-enabled site on the network and relating to a dialog between the speech-enabled site and the user, the information maintained on a second site on the network; and

using the server system to provide a service of the second site to the speech-enabled site, to provide the information associated with the user to the speech-enabled site.

The cited references neither disclose nor suggest such a method, whether the references are taken individually or in combination. In particular, the references do not disclose or suggest receiving a request at a server system for information associated with a user, where the request is associated with a speech-enabled site on the network and relates to a dialog between the speech-enabled site and the user, and where the information is maintained on a second site on the network; and using the server system to provide a service of the second site to the speech-enabled site, to provide the information associated with

the user to the speech-enabled site. Consequently, claim 45 and its dependent claims are allowable over the cited art.

Claim 50 provides:

50. (Amended) An apparatus configured to allow a user to interactively browse a telephony-based network, the apparatus comprising:

means for coupling a user to a first speech-enabled service at a first location on the network;

means for acquiring information associated with the user;

means for outputting an indication audibly detectable by the user, the indication corresponding to a second speech-enabled service at second location on the network;

means for detecting the user speaking an utterance matching the indication;

means for providing the user with access to the second speech-enabled service in response to the user speaking the utterance matching the indication; and

means for providing the information associated with the user to the second speech-enabled service in response to the user speaking the utterance matching the indication, the information for use by the second speech-enabled service to optimize a spoken dialog between the user and the second speech-enabled service.
(Underlining added.)

Neither Balakrishnan nor Imielinski contains any disclosure or suggestion of such an apparatus, particularly one which includes the features highlighted above. Consequently, claims 50 and 51 are allowable over the cited art.

Claim 52 provides:

52. A system comprising:

a first processing system configured to execute a speech-enabled browser, the browser configured to maintain information associated with a user; and

a second processing system coupled on a network to the first

processing system and configured to operate as a speech-enabled site, the second processing system configured to
in response to receiving an access request from a
remote user, transmit a request to the browser for the information
associated with the user;
receive the information associated with the user in
response to transmitting the request;
apply the information associated with the user to
optimize the dialog with the user by reducing the number of
required states of the dialog; and
execute the optimized dialog with the user.
(Underlining added.)

Neither Balakrishnan nor Imielinski contains any disclosure or suggestion of a system as recited in claim 52, particularly one which includes a speech-enabled site on a network transmitting a request to a speech-enabled browser in response to receiving an access request from a remote user, the speech-enabled site receiving information associated with the user in response to the request and then using the information associated with the user to optimize a dialog with the user. Consequently, claims 52 and its dependent claims are allowable over the cited art.

Claim 56 includes limitations similar to those in claim 52 discussed above and is allowable over the cited art for similar reasons along with its dependent claims.

For the foregoing reasons, all claims are believed to be in condition for allowance. Allowance of the present application is, therefore, respectfully requested.

If any additional fee is required, please charge Deposit Account No. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,
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May 8, 2002
(Date of Deposit)

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MARKED-UP VERSION OF AMENDED CLAIMS SHOWING CHANGES

Please amend the claims as follows:

1 24. (Amended) A method of executing a spoken dialog between a user and a
2 speech-enabled site in a network including a plurality of voice-hyperlinked
3 speech-enabled sites, the method comprising:
4 acquiring information associated with the user at a first speech-enabled
5 site of the plurality of speech-enabled sites during a first spoken dialog between
6 the user and the first speech-enabled site;
7 in response to the user initiating a voice hyperlink to access a second
8 speech-enabled site of the plurality of speech-enabled sites, providing the
9 information associated with the user to the second speech-enabled site; and
10 optimizing a second spoken dialog between the user and the second
11 speech-enabled site by applying the information associated with the user to
12 reduce a number of states of the second spoken dialog.

1 31. (Amended) A method of facilitating operation of a plurality of
2 interconnected speech-enabled sites on a network, the method comprising:
3 using a server system on the network to execute a browser for enabling a
4 user to access the speech-enabled sites; and
5 using the [server system] voice browser to broker information associated
6 with the user for the speech-enabled sites on the network.

1 50. (Amended) An apparatus configured to allow a user to interactively browse
2 a telephony-based network, the apparatus comprising:
3 means for coupling a user to a first speech-enabled service at a first
4 location on the network;
5 means for acquiring information associated with the user;
6 means for outputting an indication audibly detectable by the user, the
7 indication corresponding to a second speech-enabled service at second location
8 on the network;
9 means for detecting the user speaking an utterance matching the
10 indication;
11 means for [coupling] providing the [originating] user with access to the
12 second speech-enabled service in response to the user speaking [an] the
13 utterance matching the [audio] indication; and
14 means for providing the information associated with the user to the
15 second speech-enabled service in response to the user speaking [an] the utterance
16 matching the [audio] indication, the information for use by the second speech-
17 enabled service to optimize a spoken dialog between the user and the second
18 speech-enabled service.